

Note from the Publisher

Dear Readers:

Beginning today, you will find a new section "Pastimes" in your Farmington Observer. Pastimes will feature what was formerly called Taste, but much more. It will also include stories on shopping, travel, books, hobbies and other diversions and videos. We are repackaging these stories in our Sunday Observer because Sunday is a time to relax and do what you want to do — not what you have to do — and enjoy this information. Look inside Pastimes for the popular "Where Can I Find" feature along with a list of what's happening on minstreets and malls in our towns.

As part of our repackaging, we have moved our art news to Thursday and combined it with entertainment to become "Arts and Entertainment" in an effort to help you plan your weekend activities.

As always, I welcome your comments. You can email me at arosek@oe.hometown.com or call me at (734) 953-2100.

Sincerely,

Ann Rosek



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The contest is open to new and renewal subscriptions. Senior citizens rates are available.

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Firefighter of the year Gallison's award attributed to his career contributions

BY JONI HUBRED

STAFF WRITER
jhubred@oe.hometown.com

Brian Gallison might not have set out to be a firefighter, but his dedication to the job has earned him the highest accolade offered by the Farmington Hills Fire Department.

He was named "Firefighter of the Year" at the department's annual banquet, held Jan. 4 at the Costick Activities Center.

"Being named firefighter of the year is not always about a single event, but more often a testament to an individual's contributions to the organization over the course of their career and a testament to their character and professionalism," said Fire Chief Rich Marinucci. "This year's selection is an excellent example of the type of individual who has earned the respect of his peers and the public."

Gallison, 27, graduated from Birmingham-School High School in 1992, then headed for Oakland Community College.

"I didn't know what I wanted to do," he said. "Then I found the fire academy. I came out the top academic student, so I figured this is something I can do well."

His family has something of a tradition when it

Please see HONOR, A2



Honoree: Fire Chief Rich Marinucci presents a plaque to Firefighter of the Year Brian Gallison. After Gallison's name is engraved, the plaque will hang at Fire Station #15, where he's based. He also received a commemorative fire helmet.

STAFF PHOTOS BY BILL BRIDGER



Rescue: Farmington Hills Firefighter of the Year Brian Gallison is skilled in extrication techniques.

Hearing on school grades set for Friday

■ The Michigan Dept. of Education will hold a hearing in Farmington on Jan. 18 to gauge public opinion about a new accreditation system that would give schools letter grades.

BY JONI HUBRED

STAFF WRITER
jhubred@oe.hometown.com

A controversial letter grading system for schools will likely be one of the hottest topics at seven public forums on the new Education YES! accreditation system, proposed by the Michigan Department of Education.

The department will host two meetings in the Detroit area: 7 p.m. on Thursday, Jan. 17 at the Goughly Career and Technical Center, 900 Dickerson in Detroit and 10 a.m. Friday, Jan. 18 at the Farmington Public School District's Training Center, 33000 Thomas Street in Farmington.

The Farmington hearing was added this week to an existing schedule of night meetings, said department spokesperson T. J. Bucholz.

Folks asked us to do one during the day, for people who work at night," he said.

Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Watkins announced plans to build a new accountability system for Michigan schools in June, after he concluded that the state's system of school accreditation was too heavily weighted on assessment test scores.

Under the plan, schools are expected to receive their first letter grades by spring 2003. They will measure a number of quality indicators, like family involvement and professional development, but 75 percent would be based on Michigan Educational Assessment Program test scores.

Officials in Farmington and Clarenceville Schools have publicly expressed their concerns about the idea of grading schools. Bucholz said the department expects to hear plenty about the idea.

"I think that's probably one of the most controversial pieces of this, because it's such a departure from anything the state has done in the past," he said. "I've heard some backlash, but

Please see HEARING, A6

Schools should have safety plans

BY SUE BUCK

STAFF WRITER
sbuck@oe.hometown.com

Lt. Gov. Dick Posthumus said he acted on one of his New Year's resolutions when he visited Lanigan Elementary in Farmington Hills Thursday.

This year, the gubernatorial candidate is traveling across the state to urge Michigan school districts to develop, implement and practice an up-to-date safety plan. Lanigan is just one school among others in the Farmington school district with such a plan.

Posthumus is also highlighting

schools in Grand Rapids, Lansing and Flint.

"We were also looking for schools who had good relationships with law enforcement agencies," Posthumus said. "If a community is going to survive, it has to have good jobs, good schools, good neighborhoods and a safe community."

Lanigan Elementary fourth graders Samantha Rice, Sydney Cort, Michael Storey and Davey Hicks — who are peer mediators — presented a skit to demonstrate how potentially volatile situations can be deflated at the grassroots level.

"It is an ongoing necessity and one in which we must not become complacent," Lanigan Principal Marva Turner said of school safety plans.

Estralee Michaelson, director of safe schools and student services, said, "Our plan is prevention, response and recovery."

When a response plan was first introduced, teachers would "turn white" at the mention of a gun or a lockdown, she said. Keeping classroom doors locked and having school personnel wear name tags are some ways the dis-

trict has responded, she said.

Farmington Hills Fire Department Lt. Tom Shurtliff said the Hills fire and police departments, Farmington Public Safety Department and school officials weren't strangers to each other before the school safety plan discussions started.

"It's been a natural partnership for years," Shurtliff said.

Since 1989, school liaison officers have been in Farmington schools and that has continued the partnership,

Please see PLANS, A2

Assault suspect faces juvenile trial

BY PAUL R. PACE

STAFF WRITER
ppace@oe.hometown.com

The Oakland County Prosecutor's Office has decided not to petition the court to charge a 14-year-old Farmington Hills boy accused of attempted rape as an adult.

Bob Zivian, assistant prosecutor in the Oakland County Juvenile Justice Division, said the Prosecutor's Office decided the youth has not had a chance to prove himself in the juvenile rehabilitation system.

"We don't know if there are juvenile facilities that can properly treat him," he said.

The boy's pretrial hearing was adjourned this week to 1:30 p.m. Feb. 12 before Circuit Court Judge Rae Lee Chabot, to give his attorney more time to investigate the case.

The youth is charged with second-degree criminal sexual conduct, second-degree home invasion, larceny from a person and assault with intent to commit sexual penetration. He remains in Children's Village with a \$200,000 cash bond. Because he is being charged as a juvenile,

there are no set maximum penalties if he's found guilty of the charges, Zivian said. The judge could order any punishment from probation or being incarcerated in Children's Village to making the boy a ward of state, where he could be held until he reaches age 21, said Zivian.

The charges stem from the Dec. 22 attack on a 30-year-old woman who the boy called to strip for a party at an apartment in the Green Hill complex, Hills police said.

The boy, who lived in the complex with his parents, used a butcher knife to attack the woman in an apartment corridor and tried to rape her several times, police said. The woman testified she put up a fight and managed to escape. She was not seriously injured.

Police said after his arrest, the suspect confessed to the attempted rape and two other attempted abductions of women in December; one in the Green Hill complex, the other in the Windemere Apartments, just north of Green Hill.

Both women managed to escape after being grabbed from behind.

COHA meeting location changed

The next general meeting for the Council of Homeowners Associations will be held at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, Jan. 15 at Farmington Hills Fire Station 4, on the west side of Drake Road between 12 and 13 Mile Roads.

The meeting location has changed, due to construction at the Farmington Community Library.

Mayor Nancy Bates and members of the Hills city council have been invited to report on the "state of the city" and what lies ahead in 2002.

School board at NFHS

Farmington School Board members will hold their regular meeting at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 15 in the auditorium at North Farmington High School, 32900 W. 13 Mile Road in Farmington Hills. The board will discuss budget matters and discontinuing the drivers ed program.